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Testimony before the Highways and Transit Subcommittee
of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
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Thank you, Chairman Duncan and Ranking Member DeFazio, for the opportunity to testify today.

Congressman Chabot and I are here today to discuss the necessity for Congress to develop and prioritize a program to finance nationally-vital transportation projects where costs cannot be borne by one or two States alone.

An example of such *critical infrastructure* project is the Brent Spence Bridge which, as you can see from our first handout, is a vital interstate highway structure on the critical north-south I-75 corridor that crosses the Ohio River between our two districts. As you can see from the second handout, one-third of the population of the United States lives within 275 miles of this corridor. The Brent Spence Bridge carries more than 3% of our GDP across the Ohio River annually. The replacement of this bridge is critical to America's economy.

As your subcommittee begins to develop core elements of the surface transportation reauthorization, we submit that a new process by which nationally-vital transportation projects can be addressed and funded should be developed for the economic well-being of the nation as a whole. Specifically, we must develop a rational process whereby *critical infrastructure* projects will be objectively identified and funded based upon merit. The 2011 surface transportation authorization presents one of the most significant opportunities to fulfill that need.

Despite our best efforts over the course of previous surface transportation authorization bills, Congress has not established a sufficient mechanism for funding *critical infrastructure* projects where costs are so high they cannot be funded by one or more States. For example, the Brent Spence Bridge project will ultimately cost between \$2 and \$3 billion to complete, a burden which Kentucky and Ohio cannot shoulder alone. It would take a generation or more to fund this one project under current highway trust fund allocations to our States.

The Brent Spence Bridge enables more than \$400 billion of commerce to travel from origin to destination annually. With Interstate truck traffic projected to grow by ten-percent by 2030, the bridge in its current state will gridlock a vital national corridor causing lost income, wasted fuel and reduced employment because we cannot efficiently deliver goods to customers.

However, Ohio and Kentucky would both have to dedicate their entire highway transportation infrastructure budgets to the exclusion of everything else in order to fund the Brent Spence Bridge project. This is fiscally unrealistic and would in any case be unreasonable given that the benefits of the project flow to the nation, not just two States.

Major transportation bottlenecks cause thousands of hours of delay and have a negative impact on individual travelers, commuters, families, truckers, shippers and receivers particularly

when the routes they travel are hostage to underfunded *critical* infrastructure nodes of national significance.

The Woodrow Wilson Bridge between Maryland and Virginia, just southeast of downtown Washington, D.C., is traveled daily by some in the room today. In 1993, 200,000 vehicles crossed that bridge every day. The Woodrow Wilson Bridge carries Interstates 95 and 495 across the Potomac River. The bridge supports a transportation corridor of national significance connecting the southeastern and northeastern United States. At the time, the U.S. Department of Transportation estimated that the value of the freight trucked across this bridge was equivalent to 1.3 percent of the entire gross domestic product of the United States.

By the mid-1990s the bridge was carrying 250% of the traffic volume for which it was designed. The bridge only had three lanes with five highway lanes worth of traffic trying to squeeze through. The bridge had become a bottleneck with national significance, causing tens of thousands of hours of delay to American travelers and commerce.

Neither Maryland nor Virginia could assume the \$2.5 billion cost of this project which was several times the annual statewide infrastructure budgets for both States. Additionally, there was no federal program to fund projects that impact the nation as a whole. If Congress had not prioritized special funding for the Woodrow Wilson Bridge - funding that paid for the majority of the cost of the project - the Woodrow Wilson Bridge may have come close to closure with economic impacts felt far beyond the D.C. metro area.

Congress helped resolve the funding issue, and the Woodrow Wilson Bridge project was completed. However, resolution was cobbled together through exception and not a cohesive or strategic decision-making and prioritization like the one we are advocating for today.

The 2011 surface transportation authorization must include a mechanism for dealing with *critical* infrastructure projects like the Wilson Bridge with a national economic impact. Funding such projects will also hasten economic recovery and put Americans back to work.

As we have noted, a current example of a project impacting the nation as a whole is the Brent Spence Bridge which crosses the Ohio River between Kentucky and Ohio in Cincinnati.

Not only a vital conduit of goods and people across the Ohio River, the bridge also connects Canada to Florida via I-75 as well as Ohio to the western United States via I-71. The bridge also feeds traffic and freight into Chicago via I-74 and all the way to Alabama via I-65. The Brent Spence Bridge affects commerce in over sixty congressional districts in Georgia, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and Tennessee.

The Brent Spence Bridge, completed in 1963, was designed to carry 80,000 vehicles per day. In 1986, the breakdown lanes were removed to accommodate increased traffic. The bridge will soon have to accommodate nearly 200,000 vehicles per day. The Brent Spence Bridge is functionally obsolete.

Again, the bridge is illustrative of projects that impact the nation as a whole. It carries over \$400 billion in freight annually across the Ohio River for the American economy. That is approximately three-percent of the U.S. gross domestic product in 2010. By 2030, the amount of freight is expected to increase to \$813 billion, annually. In other words, the Brent Spence Bridge is *critical* infrastructure *for* the American economy.

According to the Federal Highway Administration, completion of the project would support 64,000 jobs. Additionally, a study by the Texas Transportation Institute states that congestion attributable to the Brent Spence Bridge costs 3.6 million person-hours of delay each year for passenger cars and 240,000 vehicle-hours of delay for commercial vehicles. The study notes that if the project was completed today, delay for passenger cars would be reduced by eighty-percent and delay for commercial vehicles would be reduced by eighty-eight percent.

The Brent Spence Bridge is one example of a transportation mega project that is *critical infrastructure* to the American economy.

I urge all my colleagues to ensure the 2011 surface transportation reauthorization bill authorizes a program and provides a funding mechanism for *critical infrastructure* projects that impact the nation as whole.

Finally, I would like to express my tremendous appreciation to Steve Chabot for his partnership in our effort to achieve something so important for our nation.

Thank you for your time and consideration today.